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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet identifies and discusses the five major sources that provide information about candidates applying for teaching positions. These sources are: (1) academic credentials and certification; (2) letters of recommendation; (3) the application; (4) the resume; and (5) the interview. Suggestions are given for providing appropriate presentations in each area. Fourteen commonly asked interview questions are listed with suggestions for focusing responses. The guide concludes with a presentation of 23 criteria by which candidates frequently are judged. These criteria include exhibition of positive personal traits during the interview; presentation of content knowledge and professionalism by the candidate; and the consideration of personal/personnel advantages to the school. (MM)

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YOUR FIRST JOB INTERVIEW

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NAEA offers a comprehensive placement service to assist professionals from all areas of its membership. Services include access to a wide range of career-oriented publications, an interviewing/listing service at the annual spring convention, and a monthly bulletin of current job openings.

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YOUR
FIRST
JOB INTERVIEW

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with special acknowledgement
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YOUR FIRST JOB INTERVIEW

As you complete your undergraduate studies to become eligible for certification as an art teacher, you need to give thought to the next step: making application and preparing for interviews with school districts in which you would like to teach. Most school districts make it quite clear how and when interviews are conducted. What is not clear are the criteria which interviewers use to grant interviews and make the selection of new teachers from the many candidates. Similarly unclear are the kinds of questions asked of candidates and the range of answers which make a difference in the selection of future employees. This directory provides information based upon hiring practices in the Milwaukee Public Schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and in the Fulton County Schools in Atlanta, Georgia.

Five major sources provide information about candidates, and you should give serious consideration to each:

1) Academic credentials and certification.
2) Letters of recommendation.
3) The application.
4) The resume.
5) The interview.

1. ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS AND CERTIFICATION

By the time you get to this point in the job-seeking process, there is not much to be done about grade point averages. Generally speaking, a high grade point average is an advantage. It indicates your commitment to hard work, your ability to organize time, and your understanding of the educational process. Usually 'B' averages and above will require no further investigation by the interviewer; however, lower averages and significantly low grades may result in further discussion, *if* you get to the interview stage. However, many other considerations are as important as grade points in attempting to predict your success as a teacher.

2. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

One of the most important sources of information regarding your potential in the classroom are letters of recommendation from cooperating teachers and supervising teachers. The professional judgment of an experienced teacher who has observed your performance is critical. Many interviewers confirm recommendations with phone calls--especially if there is a professional network between the schools and the teacher education institution. You should recognize the student teaching encounter as one of the keystone experiences in your preparation and should invest your maximum effort toward an excellent performance.

3. THE APPLICATION

Most schools and districts require standard information regarding academic preparation, related experience, level preference, etc. Many also require the applicant to provide a brief writing sample. This sample is another source of valuable information to the interviewer. Writing is examined for both form and content. Are you literate? Do you have a knowledge of basic grammar, and do you possess writing skills? Do you show evidence of a developing philosophy which is consistent with that of the district? You should take this task very seriously since writing and articulate expression are important components of teaching. A poorly crafted application certainly reduces the possibility of an interview.

4. THE RESUME

Interviewers receive many applications. A well expressed and carefully designed resume can be a distinct advantage in securing an interview. A handsomely presented resume can make an interviewer remember your name among the many that come across his/her desk. I still remember the name of a candidate who presented a uniquely folded and hand lettered resume which was printed on quality paper. It said something to me about the aesthetic awareness of this individual. Besides the form, the content should reflect the kinds of experiences and qualities which are valuable to the school district and to the children it serves. Experiences beyond formal education which reflect your interest in children and art education are

an advantage. In addition, leadership experiences and participating in student and pre-professional organizations are important activities which reflect your leadership skills and your passion for your chosen field. I am impressed by participation in an NAEA Student Chapter, by exhibition involvement, and by general student leadership efforts--both during undergraduate education and, even earlier, in high school.

5. THE INTERVIEW

The interview can be the most important step in securing a position you want in art education. Different districts assign the task of interviewing to a range of staff members. In a small district the superintendent may do all the interviewing. There is a recent trend toward involving principals and teacher committees in the interview process. In larger districts, the art supervisor will likely have the responsibility for interviewing and recommending a candidate to the Staffing Services Director. Regardless of who is doing the interview, there are some standard questions which are asked--and some responses which tend to discriminate between candidates. The questions are designed to provide additional information about the candidate, including: philosophy, commitment, ability to think under pressure, knowledge of the school/district, and preparation for the specific job at hand. Below are some standard questions which could be asked by an interviewer. I have indicated some of the responses which tend to give the interviewee an advantage--or disadvantage in some cases.

Give a brief summary of your preparation for and interest in teaching in the Sleepy Hollow School District.

You should have some knowledge of the success of the district and the art department and of the challenges currently at hand, and you should be able to indicate how you may be able to assist the district and the art department toward their goals.

Describe your student teaching experience. Cite three things you learned from it (beyond what was taught in your methods class).

What the interviewer is seeking here is some evidence of thoughtful application of undergraduate training to the real world of teaching. I expect to hear that "I wasn't prepared for organizing for so many classes and children" or "I found out that lesson plans don't always work, and you had better be prepared for anything." I am concerned if I do not get a response to this question, or if "Everything was great."

Describe your experiences in working with children outside of teaching.

Interviewers realize that not everyone has the opportunity to work with children while he/she is attending college. However, the business of schooling is about children. This is especially important in elementary art education. If you are sincere about a career in which you spend all of your time with children, you should have some familiarity with them and with their development.

What teaching or student teaching experiences have you had with various racial, ethnic, and/or socioeconomic groups?

This is especially important in urban districts which embrace many different nationalities and ethnic groups. It will be to your advantage if you have had some experience with children from varied ethnic backgrounds.

What teaching or student teaching experience have you had with exceptional children, ie. ED, LD, MR, etc?

Most certification programs require some course work in the exceptional child. It is becoming increasingly important in our district that all candidates have some experience with a wide range of exceptionalities. It will be further to your credit if you have had some experience in early childhood education.

What do you consider your greatest strength? How do you incorporate your strength into the teaching process?

The interviewer will look for your personal reflections on your teaching potential. "I love children" is important, but what the interviewer seeks is your thoughtful analysis of experiences as they relate to the

job of successful teaching. It will be impressive if you can give a clear example of how your strengths can have a positive impact upon a teaching situation.

What do you consider to be an area in which you need to improve? Explain.
You should provide a thoughtful and honest appraisal of your capabilities as well as of areas in which you could use further professional development. It is *not* impressive to say you need no improvement, for all teachers should continually seek professional growth.

If I were to come to your class to observe, what would I see? Explain your style of teaching.
Teaching should be a demanding, active encounter with students. The interviewer will look for comments which reflect your understanding of school/classroom conditions and student needs. You will have an advantage if you have an understanding of some recent research on pedagogy to back up your description of your teaching style.

Give me an example of strategies you have used to enhance students' motivation to learn. How do you motivate the reluctant learner?
There is another opportunity to relate successful teaching experiences. I look for understanding of current theories of art education and how they apply to motivating students. It will be to your credit if you can describe how you have inspired student interest in art history or aesthetic concepts.

Describe your philosophy of discipline and give examples of how you have implemented your philosophy in the classroom.
The worst possible answer is "Send them to the principal." However, I wonder at the candidate who "hasn't had discipline problems." You have an advantage if you understand that proper planning tends to prevent discipline problems, and if you can articulate a willingness and ability to accept responsibility for the relationships among students, teachers and parents.

Describe the experiences that have given you the most satisfaction when working with children.
This is another question designed to call forth the

candidate's thoughtful analysis of the teaching process. The most frequent response is "When a student catches on," or "Seeing a student surpass his/her expectations." It will be especially effective if you can describe a satisfying experience with children in a personal and articulate manner.

MAKING THE JUDGMENT

The interviewer usually spends from 30 to 45 minutes listening to the responses of the candidate. Though most interviewers have specific criteria, the final judgment is still somewhat intuitive. This intuition is guided by some of the qualities you have revealed during the interview.

General Positive Qualities

1. You are enthusiastic.
2. You are committed to education in general and to the teaching profession.
3. You seem confident.
4. You have good verbal skills and voice quality, present ideas logically, and justify your ideas and opinions.
5. You answer the questions asked.
6. You possess a sense of humor.

Content Area/Art Education

1. You have a strong, thoughtfully presented portfolio with evidence of studio strengths in one or more areas (both your own and children's art work are well represented).
2. You are involved in professional activities and have some knowledge of current issues in art education.
3. You are, or intend to be, a member of the state art education association and of the National Art Education Association.
4. You recognize the visual arts as one of several arts forms.
5. You understand the contribution of the visual arts in the context of the total school program.

Personal/Personnel Advantages

1. You possess the willingness and the personality to become an active and fully involved faculty member

beyond the art education program.

2. You have a thorough personal and professional commitment to art education, teaching, and children/young people, including an interest in personal and professional growth.
3. You are willing to devote time and energy beyond regular school hours, within reason. You don't appear to be a "clock watcher."
4. You possess technical knowledge of and skill in handling the tools and processes of a wide variety of art media, appropriate to various educational levels (elementary, middle, and/or high school).
5. You have the ability to talk about a personal philosophy of art education and teaching.
6. You possess leadership ability, initiative, and resourcefulness.
7. You have knowledge of and ability to incorporate aesthetics, art criticism, and art history as an integral part of all art courses.

Some Additional Advantages

1. You are neat and attractive in dress and posture, and relaxed in manner.
2. You speak in a pleasant voice and respond directly to questions and comments.
3. You are informed about professional art education associations and are supportive of their goals and programs.
4. Your portfolio contains only creative work--no copy work or pattern-oriented examples.
5. You are prompt in meeting your interview appointment.

Other resourses relating to careers in art education available through NAEA include:

Finding a Job in Elementary and Secondary Art Education
Finding a Job in Higher Education in Art Education
Career Education & the Art Teaching Profession: Monograph #1
Appleseeds

For a more complete listing of available publications contact NAEA.